

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 088683
ORIGIN EA-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ANTANARIVO
INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 088683

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:MA, TW, PLOS, CGEN

SUBJECT:ROC SHIP DETAINED IN MADAGASCAR

1. ROC EMBASSY WASHINGTON UPON INSTRUCTIONS FROM TAIPEI HAS ASKED FOR USG ASSISTANCE WITH RESPECT TO A PANAMANIAN-REGISTRY VESSEL, THE ORIENT LONDON, OWNED BY AN ROC FIRM, THE CHIEN LUNG NAVIGATION COMPANY. THE ORIENT LONDON WAS CARRYING A CARGO OF ORE OUT OF MAPUTO, DEVELOPED LEAKS AND WAS TOWED INTO DIEGO SUAREZ IN JUNE 1977, WHERE THE SHIP, ACTING CAPTAIN CHANG KUNG-EN AND THE CREW OF FOURTEEN HAVE BEEN DETAINED SINCE. ONE CREW MEMBER HAS DIED, REPORTEDLY OF NATURAL CAUSES, AND THE SHIP ITSELF WAS APPARENTLY MOVED IN MID MARCH TO TAMATAVE WHERE ITS CARGO IS BEING UNLOADED. ROC CLAIMS NOT TO KNOW WHY SHIP AND CREW HAVE BEEN DETAINED.

2. IN THE ABSENCE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH TANANARIVE, ROC HAS ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION AND ASSIST CREW
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THROUGH A WIDE VARIETY OF PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS. ROC EMBASSY'S INSTRUCTIONS INDICATED, WITHOUT EXPLAINING FURTHER, THAT THE CREW'S POSITION IS NOW BECOMING "SERIOUS". ROC HAS ASKED WHETHER USG COULD, ON THE BASIS OF HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS,

APPROACH THE GDRM TO SEEK INFORMATION ON CREW AND TO

FACILITATE CREW'S RETURN TO TAIWAN, ALL OF WHOM ARE ROC CITIZENS.

3. ACTION REQUESTED: UNLESS EMBASSY PERCEIVES OBJECTION, IT SHOULD PURSUE MATTER BY APPROACHING MOFA, OR THROUGH WHATEVER OTHER MEANS IT BELIEVES WOULD BE EFFECTIVE, IN ORDER TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE CREW, THE REASONS FOR THEIR DETENTION AND THE PROSPECT FOR THE CREW BEING PERMITTED TO RETURN TO TAIWAN. EMBASSY SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT IT IS ACTING ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS AS A DISINTERESTED INTERMEDIARY IN VIEW OF THE ABSENCE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN MADAGASCAR AND ROC. VANCE

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